

DESCRIPTION

of the

Derby, County of

HIGH PEAK OF DERBYSHIRE,

together with

AN ACCOUNT OF POOLE'S HOLE,

and some other

Remarkable Places,

hitherto called

THE WONDERS OF THAT COUNTY.

—

EXTRACTED FROM

A TOUR THROUGH PARTS OF ENGLAND, SCOTLAND,
AND WALES,



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DESCRIPTION

HIGH PEAK OF DERBYSHIRE

AN ACCOUNT OF WOLFEHOLE



THE WORKS OF THE REV. J. H. WOLFEHOLE

A NEW EDITION OF THE WORKS OF THE REV. J. H. WOLFEHOLE

By J. H. WOLFEHOLE

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LONDON

A

DESCRIPTION

of the

PEAK IN DERBYSHIRE,

&c. &c.

IT is very necessary that those who travel for information, should furnish themselves with the best account of every thing they find worthy particular attention, otherwise the principal use of their labours is lost. To explore the hidden secrets of Nature, and view the elegant erections of Art, are certainly delightful pursuits to the speculative mind, and at the same time afford rational entertainment, and solid instruction. It would probably conduce much to the certain information of the public, if travellers were furnished with a good description

scription of the principal places worthy of notice, as it might point out immediately the most proper objects of observation, and greatly help their inquiries. The following description of *Peake's Hole, in Derbyshire, &c.* is extracted from the Tour of Mr. SULLIVAN, and as it is written with a vigour that is likely to interest the Reader, we shall proceed to give the words of the author without any farther preface.

THE approach to this cavern (says he) is grand and tremendous; a river issuing from its mouth runs to your left, and a range of rocks, rearing their heads to the skies, surround you. One of these is measured two hundred and fifty-one feet perpendicular. Being arrived at the entrance, which is forty-two feet high, and one hundred and twenty feet wide, the attention is caught by a most uncommon sight. Cottages scattered up and down in this dark abode, and a multitude of women and children spinning at wheels; in every respect it carries the
appear-

appearance of another world : nor does the animated prospect confine itself ; for the merry creatures, who are thus employed, extend themselves so far, as to form a perspective which in imagination seems to have no end. The first information you receive from your rustic conductor, who is the naturalist and philosopher of the place, is the manner in which water congeals itself to spar. “ At first it is,” says he, “ but a “ transparent drop ; by the air it afterwards “ becomes a clay, and then gradually forms “ itself into the petrification.”

THE next thing you are desired to observe is the Flitch of Bacon, a large incrustation hanging on one side, which you quickly pass by, and then come to a small door, which affords you the most stupendous view of a concave you can conceive. On, however, you go, stooping till you get into the Bell House, and thence passing along you are shewn a line, about the height of your shoulders, at which the

OKINVAELI water

water arrives in the time of heavy rains. Hence, stooping considerably, you come to the river, on which there is a boat, into which you get, and laying at full length, to save your head from the impending rocks, you are thus ferried over, or rather carried up a winding stream, till landing, you fancy yourself arrived in the first apartment of the infernal deities. Nothing can be more stupendous than the appearance of this dreary *salle du souterraine*. The length of it, as measured, is two hundred and seventy feet; the width two hundred and ten; and the height one hundred and twenty. Stopping here to enjoy the gloomy horrors of the scene, a number of candles are dispersed, which twinkling like stars, afford an awful assemblage. The return of the boat, however, with other passengers, immediately beneath you, stretched in the like cautious manner, and paddling through a hole scarcely large enough for a man to creep in at, is ridiculously whimsical.

LEAVING

LEAVING this, you get to a winding of the river, which you pass upon the shoulders of your guides, and thence arrive at Roger Rain's House, so called from drops of water, which incessantly filtrate through every part of it. From this you continue to the Chancel, where calmly proceeding, you are suddenly accosted by the voices of a choir of men, chaunting in a niche above you, at the elevation of above fifty-seven feet. No terrene art could produce so wonderful an effect. The vaulted roof rent into a thousand shapes; the height of the cavern itself; the stillness of the scene, saving the patterings of the water in the rainy cell; altogether, the uncommon admixture of the sublime and beautiful. Here we stopped. The airs were slow and solemn which were sung: every thing conspired to turn the mind to meditation. Nature appeared in awful, though frightful majesty before us: in a word, we could not but fancy ourselves transported to another world.

FROM

FROM the Chancel you continue to the Devil's Cellar. Hence you proceed by a sandy hillock, descending gradually one hundred and fifty feet, and at length come to the Half-way House, as it is called, where you have a fine transparent run of water, and where you are shewn how rain and snow, penetrating through the earth, force themselves into the cavern, and often occasion an alarming swelling of the torrent of the river. Passing on, you proceed through three most regularly, though naturally-formed arches, near the borders of the river, whence you fancy you hear the rumbling of a cascade: and then crossing the river, come to another range of equally as beautiful arches, which conducts you, with the river on your right, to the hanging rock, and a petrified snake, in high preservation.

FROM this spot you get to the place where the current rolls rapidly along, the water distils in abundance down the sides, and where we perceived the remains of
mud

mud left upon the rocks, when the cave, as it frequently is, was last filled with water. Still continuing, and passing through another range of arches, and Tom of Lincoln, so called from its resemblance to a bell, you at length get to the extremity of this wonderful place, two thousand two hundred and fifty feet from the entrance, and six hundred and twenty-one feet beneath the surface of the hill.

THIS, however, is not supposed the end of the cavern; and as a considerable stream of water runs through a small opening at the extremity, many people think it continues farther*.

BEFORE I quit this spot, I must not omit mentioning the staggering effect of a blast, as they stile it, occasioned by a small quantity of powder crammed into a rock, and set fire to. The explosion is wonderfully grand:

* Not long since, a gentleman determined to try if he could not dive under the rock, and rise in the cavern which is supposed to be still beyond it: he plunged in, but, as might be expected, struck his head against the rock, and fell motionless to the bottom, from which the attendants, with difficulty, dragged him out.

grand: heaven and earth seem coming together. All visitors are treated with this salute, and we, of course, had our share of it.

THE spirit of curiosity had so warped our rational faculties, and danger was become so familiar to us, that we determined upon a plan that wiser men would have shuddered at the idea of. This was no other than the exploring a prodigious cavern, said to be three miles in length, and strongly supposed by the miners to have a communication with the Peak Cavern, as they insist upon it the same river runs through both. Summoning therefore a *posse-comitatus* of all the miners about Castleton, we in brief told them our intention. Astonishment at first prevented them from thinking us serious: none but two or three had ever ventured upon a trial; and even custom had not reconciled the others to so hazardous an enterprize.....A promise of reward, however, prevailed upon the whole, and they agreed to attend us in the morning. In the mean time a messenger being dispatched to Sheffield for torches, we
began,

began, with all due form, to prepare for our descent: this was soon accomplished. A paper of memorandums, and a card, in case of an accident, telling who our friends were, and where they were to be found, were left upon our table in the inn. Thus guarding against the worst that could befall us, at least so far as it respected matters which we should no longer have any concern in, we early the next morning, accompanied by a chosen set of our guides, repaired to the top of the mountain, where the scissure opens itself about three feet in diameter. Provided by the miners with proper dresses, we then stripped ourselves of our own outward apparel, and putting on each a pair of canvass trowsers, a flannel jacket, and over that a canvass frock, with a handkerchief round our heads, and a miner's cap, we proceeded, one by one, down this dreadful abyss, for the distance of about four hundred and twenty feet perpendicular.

IMAGINATION can scarcely form a descent more perilous. The only steps or things

things to hold by, are bits of oak stuck into the sides, by the inhabitants of the place since it was first discovered, and which, from want of use, it was natural to suppose might have either rotted or loosened themselves in the earth ; moreover, a false step hurled one inevitably to destruction : fortunately all was firm, and we arrived at the bottom unhurt. Here ranging ourselves in order, with a large bundle of candles and torches, independent of the candles which each of us carried, we proceeded, with tolerable facility, through two or three lofty and most beautifully enamelled caverns of spar. This we conceived an earnest of future delight, and the tablets were accordingly set at work ; but, alas ! how great was our mistake. Here our difficulties were to commence.

FOLLOWING the guide, who, besides another who was with us, was the only one of the party who had ever penetrated before, we forced our way, with infinite struggles, through a narrow space between two rocks, and thence getting on our hands
and

and knees, were, for the full distance of a mile, obliged to crawl without ever daring to lift up our heads, the passage being both low and craggy; and, as it was likewise filled with mud, dirt, and a multitude of bits of rocks, our progress was painful indeed; we still, however, hoped for something better. On we accordingly proceeded, till a dreadful noise, rumbling along the horrible crevices of the cave, gave us to understand we were near a river: to this, then, we as fast as we were able hurried. But description is inadequate to any thing like a representation of the scene. A vast ocean seemed roaring in upon us; in some places bursting with inconceivable impetuosity, and at others falling through dreadful chasms, burst into shaggy forms to give it vent; through this our journey was to continue. A cry of "light," however, alarmed us: the confinement of the air, and the narrowness of our track, had extinguished all our torches; the candles too, all but one small end, were totally expended. We knew not

what to do. In vain the miners halloo'd for the supply which was to have come behind ; no answer was to be heard. Our fate seemed inevitable.....But the principals of the party, fortunately expressed no fear. In this extremity, a gallant fellow, who yet was ignorant of the place, but from experience knew the danger we were in, suddenly disappeared ; and after groping for a considerable time in the dark and dismal horrors of the place, at length returned to us with a supply of candles, having discovered his companions, unto whom they were given in charge, almost petrified with fear, and unable to follow us from apprehension....Reprieved in this manner from a death, which seemed to wait us in its most horrid form, we onward proceeded with a fresh recruit of spirits ; and plunging into the river above our waists, scarce tenable from the impetuosity of the torrent, cautiously picked our steps, and, at length, after a four-hours most unspeakable fatigue, arrived at about three hundred yards beyond the spot, where
the

the subterranean passage we had the day before explored, was expected to find an entrance into this dreadful place.

HERE we were obliged to stop...A passage still continued, but so filled with water, and so full of peril, that the miners themselves were averse to farther travel. Altogether, the depth we had descended was about one hundred and forty fathom, or nine hundred and eighty feet, and the length about three miles. But I must say, that I never wish even the greatest enemy I have in the world, to be so unpardonably led by curiosity, as to tempt destruction, where, independent of the dangers of maims, cuts, and fractures, the falling of a single stone might bury him in eternity for ever.

About a mile from Buxton is a cavern, called Poole's-Hole, which, though inferior in point of magnitude to the Peak, yet contains many curiosities. *Cotton*, in speaking of the Wonders, says,

" The first of these I met with in my way,

" Is a vast cave, which, the old people say,

" One Poole, an out-law, made his residence;

" But why he did so, or for what offence,

" The

" The beagles of the law should press so near,
 " In spite of horror's self, to earth him there,
 " Is in our times a riddle, and in this
 " Tradition most unkindly silent is :
 " But whatsoe'er his crime, than such a cave,
 " A worse imprisonment he could not have."

THE hole at which you enter into this cavern is small, and promises but little : after advancing, however, a few paces, and creeping as close to the ground as you possibly can, you come to a chasm, where you are shewn Poole's saddle and his turtle, both of them good incrustations. Passing hence, you come to other fine pieces of spar, variously twisted round the rocks, called Poole's tripe and his woollack, both inimitably honey-combed in the finest kind of white petrification; whilst a spring of clear transparent water issues from one side, and an exact resemblance of an elephant, with his proboscis hanging, strikes you at the other, From this place, throwing aside the pride of manhood, you creep upon all-fours, and ascending a most slippery path, open a prodigious dome, sixty or seventy feet high, where you perceive an extraordinary

dinary large piece of spar pendent from the roof, called the Flitch of Bacon; and, staring in the side, the fanciful resemblance of old Poole himself. Hence you come to the Lion, and the Lady's Toilet; the former spreading upwards, and the latter hanging down in all the carelessness of ease and elegance. These, however, conduct you but to greater beauties :.....The Dark Lantern, as it is called, which more resembles the figure of the Egyptian Sphynx; a vast quantity of incrustation falling down in folds, and the roof sparkling with transparent pieces of petrification, of the shape of icicles. From this you come to an apartment, at least fifty feet high, in which you have a small black figure in spar, resembling a mouse, and a grand range of organs, as it were, immediately above it. Leaving this, you get to the Queen of Scots Pillar, so called by the unfortunate Mary, when she visited this place; a column most beautifully surrounded with curtains of fine incrustation, airily displayed in the Gothic taste. Here most

people choose to stop; but we, urged by the spirit of curiosity, dared to venture farther....*Cotton*, indeed, throws a damp upon the mind, when he speaks of this attempt; for, in his words,

" Over the brook you're now oblig'd to stride,
 " And on the left hand by this pillar's side,
 " To seek new wonders; tho', beyond this stone,
 " Unless you safe return, you'll meet with none,
 " And that, indeed, will be a kind of one."

ON we went; the place so steep, so craggy, and so very slippery, that, had it not been for fast grasps, we should never have been able to have got to the top.... Here we stopped some time in admiration. A candle, judiciously placed, without our knowledge, at the very extremity, peeped like a star on a fine cloudy night, while another, as properly set at the bottom, whence we had ascended, had as singular and as awful an effect....*Cotton*, speaking of this, says,

" Here, thro' a hole, your kind conductors shew
 " A candle, left on purpose at the brook,
 " On which, with trembling horror whilst you look,
 " You'll fancy 't, from that dreadful precipice,
 " A spark ascending from the black abyss."

HENCE

HENCE, still adventuring upwards, you pass by the Lady's Pillion, and a Curtain, both of them beautiful incrustations; and thence passing through the eye of Saint Andrew's Needle, and keeping his throne, or pavilion, to the right, which is a remarkable petrification, both from its size and resemblance to its designation, you pass over a heap of irregular rocks, to a passage most emphatically and justly stiled Break-back Passage.....Here, crawling again, you at length come to the apparent end of this extensive cavern, (a small aperture making it probable that it still continues, although inaccessible) at the distance of 2007 feet...., Trifling as a distance of this kind may seem, it is yet wonderfully fatiguing to clamber over; for, in many places, the poet's words are far from hyperbolic:

" For, in several places among these, you meet

" With nothing worth observing but your feet,

" Which with great caution you must still dispose,

" Lest, by mischance, should you once footing lose,

" Your own true story only serve to grace

" The lying fables of the uncouth place."

RETURN.

RETURNING, therefore, with as much, or rather with a greater degree of caution than we had entered, we at last, with some difficulty, got to the day-light; in our way having paid a visit to Poole's Chamber and Parlour, in the latter of which is such an hollow and reverberating sound, that it is beyond a doubt there is a hideous cavern beneath.

BEFORE we left this land of wonders, we went to view a very extraordinary place, called Elden-Hole. Here we indeed had matter for affright: a tremendous yawning gulph, bottomless, as it is said, opens its wide mouth on the side of a hill. The noise of stones, or any other body thrown into it, gradually, and at a distance, dies away. Nothing has ever been heard of, that has fallen into it; all is inscrutable to man. Trials upon trials have been made with respect to its depth; but all without effect. *Cotton* himself tried a line and plummet two thousand six hundred and fifty-two feet, but could not touch the bottom;

tom ; neither could he at that time hear the water. We, however, fancied the contrary ; for two stones, out of a prodigious number, which we plunged into it, most certainly immersed themselves in that element ; but what, in our opinion, brought it to a positive demonstration, was, an account given us by our guide, of a man who, within these few years, was let down two hundred and ten feet, and who declared, that at the depth of about two hundred and forty feet more, there was water. In *Cotton's* time the lines were wet, which established the certainty of that element ; but the abyss was not then so exceedingly filled with it as it is at present.

MANY stories are told of accidents which have happened at this place ; cattle frequently tumble into it. But nothing can be more dreadful than the acknowledgment of a villain, who, when on the scaffold for the perpetration of some other horrid deed, confessed the having thrown an unfortunate traveller into it, whom he had robbed, and who had entrusted himself to his guidance.

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Another

Another instance of an untimely fate happened to a poor hind, who, eager for money, engaged, for a sum, to go to the bottom. His errand proved fruitless; vapour, or fright, disordered his senses: he was drawn to the top, and expired in madness in a few days.

HAVING viewed the most remarkable curiosities, we proceed to Buxton. This place, though formerly very inconsiderable, is now become the resort, in the summer season, of the first people in the kingdom. The great utility of the baths is undeniable, chemical judges allowing them to possess the efficacious qualities of both the Bath and Bristol waters. The stupendous and elegant pile of building erected there by his Grace the Duke of Devonshire, has greatly added to the importance and conveniency of the town, the whole of it being divided into shops, and houses for the accommodation of travellers. It contains besides, a spacious assembly-room, decorated in a very elegant manner, no expence having been spared to render it

one of the most superb and finished places of the kind. These, added to other improvements which naturally follow, and sanctioned by the resort, during the summer season, of such numbers of genteel families, certainly render Buxton of considerable consequence, as a fashionable watering-place.

THE manufactory of the Derbyshire Spar is considerable. The ornaments produced from it are in much esteem, and are certainly very valuable, as the great natural elegance it contains, when aided by the refinements of art, makes it much superior to most other decorations, and highly beautiful in appearance. Great variety of toys are also made of it, and, even in the smallest proportion, the richness and variegation of its colours render it exceedingly brilliant and pleasing to the eye.

It has been discovered, that the soil or the air of some particular places in this country, have been almost as favourable to the preservation of dead bodies, as the famous vaults of Bremen are represented to be.

be. Two persons are said to have been lost in a great storm of snow, on the moors, near the Woodlands, in Derbyshire, on January 14, 1674; and not being found till the 3d of May following, they then smelt so strong, that the coroner ordered them to be buried on the spot. They lay in the peat-moss for twenty-eight years and nine months, before they were looked at again; when some countrymen, having observed the extraordinary quality of this soil in preserving dead bodies from corruption, were curious enough to open the ground, to see if those persons had been so preserved; and they found them no way altered, the colour of their skin being fair and natural, and their flesh soft as that of persons newly dead.....They were afterwards exposed for twenty years, tho' they were much changed in that time by being so uncovered.

THE END.

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